

## JUST WHAT IS HELL?

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It was prophesied of Jesus: “Because thou wilt not leave my soul in **hell**, neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption” (Acts 2:27 KJV; also see Psa. 16:10)

Death has been an enemy of mankind almost since his creation. This penalty was pronounced upon Adam for his disobedience to God’s command that he was not to eat of the “*tree of knowledge of good and evil*” or he would surely die (Genesis 2:17; 3:6).

There are some interesting facts that we should know as we begin to look into this topic. The Old Testament was written in Hebrew and the New Testament in Greek. The Hebrew word for *hell* is **sheol**. *Sheol* is found 65 times in the Old Testament. This Hebrew word *sheol* is translated in the KJV: *grave* 31 times, *hell* 31 times, and *pit* 3 times. In the New Testament there are *three* different Greek words used in the KJV for *hell*: **gehenna** - translated *hell* 9 times, and *hell fire* 3 times; **hades** - translated *hell* 10 times, and *grave* 1 time; **tartaroo** - translated *hell* 1 time. Consistency does not seem to be a virtue of the King James translation of the Bible.

According to McClintock and Strong’s Encyclopedia of Biblical Theo-logical and Ecclesiastical Literature, the English word *hell* was derived from the Saxon word *helan* meaning *to cover* and signifying *the covered or invisible place*. Vine’s Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words says *hades* signifies *all-receiving* and is the probable derivation of *hado*. This authority also says tells us that the Greek *hades* corresponds to the Hebrew *sheol*.

*Gehenna* was a place in the Valley of Hinnon, just south of Jerusalem, where trash, garbage, dead animals, and the bodies of executed prisoners were thrown. At the time of Christ it functioned as an incinerator whose continually burning fires consumed and destroyed all that was cast into it. It is used, metaphorically, to denote total destruction, *not a place of torture*.

*Tartaroo*, erroneously translated “cast down to hell” in 2 Pet. 2:4, according to Vine is “*the place where those angels whose special sin is referred to in that passage are confined ‘to be reserved unto judgment;’ the region is described as ‘pits of darkness’ in the Revised Version.*” This, too, is not a place of torture and is of temporary duration. *Hades* and *sheol* or *hell* and the *grave* are the place “of all receiving” where those who die go.

To better understand our topic, we need to know about the condition that prevails at death. Jesus spoke of death as a *sleep*. When speaking of Lazarus, who had been dead and in the grave for four days, Jesus referred to him as *being asleep* (John 11:11).

Hear the words of Job: “O that you would hide me in the *grave*, that you would keep me secret, until your wrath be past, that you would appoint me a set time, and remember me” (Job 14:13). *Grave* in this verse is the Hebrew word *sheol* that is translated *hell* in thirty-one other places. If *sheol* were a place of torment, Job would never have asked to be hidden there. We read in Eccl. 9:5 and 10: “*For the living know that they will die, but the dead know nothing; they have no further reward, and even the memory of them is forgotten. Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with all your might, for in the grave, where you are going, there is neither working, nor planning, nor knowledge, nor wisdom.*” How clear is this description of the condition of death! It totally agrees with Jesus that death is a sleep from which there

will one day be an awakening. In John 5:28, 29 Jesus said, *“Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in which all that are in the tombs shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of judgment.”* The Bible teaches two resurrections in this verse. There is the *“first resurrection”* for those who faithfully follow Jesus at this present time, during the Gospel age (Rev. 20:6), and there is *the resurrection to judgment* for the world later on.

The resurrection is such an important teaching that the Apostle Paul said if there were no resurrection *“then is our preaching and your faith vain”* (1 Cor. 15:13, 14). Jesus died on Calvary’s Cross, paying the ransom price, to redeem all mankind back from sin’s penalty - death. 1 Tim. 2:5-6 tells us, *“For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus; who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time.”* It is of that *due time*, yet future, when all mankind shall be resurrected to a time of judgment, that the Prophet Isaiah speaks *“...for when thy judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness”* (Isaiah 26:9). This is the very thing that Christians have prayed for some two thousand years in what is known as The Lord’s Prayer: *“Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven.”* This prophecy and prayer will indeed come true when Jesus returns with His church to set up His 1,000-year earthly kingdom.

The Bible tells us that *“God is love”* (1 John 4:8). This being so, how can any believe He would torment millions for all eternity, in a place of hell-fire, as many religions would have us believe?

For a more in-depth look at this subject we invite you to send for the free booklet, *“The Truth About Hell.”* Mail your requests to:

**CHRISTIAN DISCIPLING MINISTRIES INTERNATIONAL**  
**32 Chapel Lane, Somersworth, NH 03878**